

RECKLESS RALPH'S

# DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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Whole Number 235

## BOOKS AND THINGS

By Lewis Gannett

Review—Clipped from the N. Y. Herald-Tribune, Jan. 8th, 1952, and sent in by Harry A. Weil, H. H. Bro. Member No. 111.

The Great Rascal: The Life and Adventures of Ned Buntline, by Jay Monaghan Little, Brown & Co., 353 pages, price \$4.50.

One of "Ned Buntline's" enemies called him a "strumpet-fondled, cow-bridged and well thrashed montebank," and evidence supports every word of the charge. Yet, when he died, in 1886, his home town paper called him "one of nature's true noblemen." The New York World credited the "colonel" with carrying more battle wounds in his body than any other American, and his G. A. R. Commandery proclaimed that "His spirit was wafted to the side of the great patriots in our land." "Buntline's" G. A. R. Commandery was located in Philadelphia, prudently far from his home town in the Catskills (N. Y.) or Westchester County towns where he had enlisted. He had never been an officer though he had himself photographed in a colonel's uniform by the great Brady; he had never been wounded in battle; he had spent much of his two years "service" in the Civil War in an Army prison charged with desertion, but he had written so much about his services in his country's wars that he may have come to believe his own stories. Dates always confused him—at various times he gave four different dates for his birth, and there was good reason for confusion about his marriages. Mr. Monaghan seems to make out that "Buntline" was married seven times, to six different women, and though he was scrupulous about divorcing discarded wives in the end, sometimes he had three different marriages running concurrently.

Yet "Buntline"—his real name was Judson—was indubitably wounded in action. The "action" was a masterly attempt to escape a Nashville, Tenn., crowd which was endeavoring to lynch him. He had shot and killed a local citizen who did not relish "Buntline's" attention to his wife. According to "Buntline's" own account, he had leaped from a window "forty-seven feet three inches (measured) on hard rock ground," and after the men of the law had led him, limping, to jail, the mob broke the jail doors and actually hung "Buntline" in the street. A friend cut the rope and saved his tough neck. Also "Buntline" was in his way, a patriot, in his denunciations of sinister foreigners and in his characterization of political opponents as socialists, a fore-runner of some contemporary "patriots." He was, in the 1840's and 1850's, one of the pillars of the Nativist "Know-Nothing," American party, which held the Irish responsible for the sins of New York and the German's responsible for the sins of St. Louis, and he was jailed for inciting a mob to attack a theatre featuring an English actor.

"Buntline's" enduring claim to fame is that he wrote four-hundred shill-



ing shockers and dime novels, and in one of them invented the character of "Buffalo Bill." He had sought to interview Frank North, the Pawnee Scout, who was the hero of the fighting at Summit Springs, Nebr., in 1869. North, a man with no taste for becoming a paperback hero, had suggested that "Buntline" talk to a lad named Cody. Cody had arrived at Summit Springs four hours after the fight was over, but he liked to talk. Three months later "Buntline's" story, crediting Cody with North's exploits, was on the news-stands of the nation: "Buffalo Bill; The King of the Border Men—The Wildest and Truest Story I Ever Wrote." Within three years "Buffalo Bill" Cody and his snow white horse were national heroes, appearing with "Buntline" himself in a melodrama which "Buntline" claimed to have written in four hours. The difficulty with writing a Life of "Buntline" is that most of the data about his career are found in his own autobiographical writings, and whenever Mr. Monaghan's research uncovers the actual record, the record proves that "Buntline" was a colossal liar. He did go to sea, as a boy, though probably not, as he claimed, in resentment of stern parental discipline and it is sheer conjecture whether any of the heroic exploits with which he credited himself in his maritime career was true.

Mr. Monaghan follows "Buntline's" story of the Seminole War with mild skepticism, but dissents vigorously when the Mexican War looms on the horizon. In that conflict the record shows that "Buntline's" sole service was the New York correspondent for a Philadelphia paper. "Buntline" fabulous New York career, however, in the Aster Place Theater riot and as author of five volumes on the "Mysterious and Miserable of New York," describing gilded dens of vice in some detail, is abundantly documented in court records of suits for blackmail, debt and riot, so are his divorce suits. If the effort to make a credible flesh-and-blood character of Edward Zane Carroll Judson, alias Ned Buntline, is not wholly successful, the picture of a swaggerer in a topsy-turvy age is none the less at once amusing and impressive. Impressive, in part, because "Buntline's" immensely popular and well forgotten dime novels were the direct ancestors of that characteristic art form of our day, the Comic strip.

Mr. Gannett sure debunks our hero, doesn't he?

### NEWSY NEWS by Ralph F. Cummings

Lacey Irven says when the tornado struck Kane, Ill., it sounded like an express train going at full speed thru the town. He says the wind and ev-

erything was high in the air, for if it was low, then it would have wiped out the whole town.

Ronald Graham says that Action Comics No. 1 for June 1938 contained the first story of Superman ever to be published. Superman No. 1 issue

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was published in late 1939.

J. P. Guinon says speaking of Tip Tops and Frank Merriwell, he has been doing quite a bit of research lately on them, and have dug up the rather curious fact that although Frank Merriwell was supposed to be the greatest pitcher Yale ever had, and although lots and lots of Tip Tops were written about games in which he pitched for Yale, only one cover shows him actually in the box pitching for the Yale team. That was number 220 and it was a really good baseball story. John H. Whitson was writing the Tip Tops then, but for some reason, Gil Patten stepped in and wrote No. 220. Whitson wasn't much good at writing baseball, but Gil was a master at it.

Bro. Max Saltzman out in Los Angeles, says—Have you noticed how the old expressions keep popping up from time to time. Many a sport commentator lately has referred to an ending as a "Merriwell finish." Or we come across the line "and another Indian bit the dust." It would make an interesting story to trace the source of these famous lines that come up these days. Of course not many of the new generation know what it is all about. In fact, I myself only got in on the tail end. We never knew what the real dime novel days were like. Long about 1925, we used to get "The Merriwell Series," and "Nick Carter" reprints at the corner drug store, the kids in school would trade, read and discuss the all important adventures of their favorite heroes. It has only been lately that I got hold of about 1500 of the Street and Smith reprints, such as Algers, Merriwell's, Lightfoots, Carters, Buffalo Bills, etc. Max says we ought to have some regional get togethers of the members of the Happy Hours Brotherhood. There must be a few of the Brothers around Los Angeles that would enjoy meeting together, say once a month, and spinning a few yarns and comparing notes—this could be done in various sections of the country. Maybe it could be rigged up where we could have a yearly convention. (Some day we are

in hopes of having a convention every year—Editor.)

J. P. Guinon says that Ed LeBlanc's story about Jocko Kelly was darned good. It had an authentic ring all the way through so you could tell that the writer knew what he was talking about. The list that he had at the end of the article will be copied into my dime novel catalogue. I have just about every dime novel title ever published, Ralph and I worked on that project for years, along with the late Talbot Hatch.

Our newest member, Albert E. Johnson, H. H. Bro. #213 says he believes he was a member way back in the old days, as the Roundup and Brotherhood sound familiar to him.

## THE BOYS OF NEW YORK

By Ernest C. Page

(Lifted from the Boys of New York Vol. 1, No. 38, May 8, 1876, by James Wm. Martin, 222 C. St. So., San Francisco, Calif., and sent to the Roundup)

"Here's yer boys' paper," the newsboy cried,

"The Boys of New York," Look at this side,

Yer see Sassy Sam with his brush is about:

He shines 'em boss, yer kean't rub dat out.

Bold Gentleman George of Hampstead Heath

Flings defiance in his enemy's teeth,  
The Steam Man thins the Indian's ranks,

While Tommy Bounce 'cuts up' his pranks.

Bought once, and yer wants to buy again,

That's right stranger, pass over your tin.

There's the boy Rovers, Frank and Pat,

You'll want another, if yer read that.  
Its writers are the best, Ah Look, Harrigan and Hart.

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So walk this way, ladies and gents,  
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## The Roundup

when answering ads

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Old Books and Pamphlets on travels in America, California and the West, and the Indians before 1860. Also old Automobile Catalogues before 1915, and literature on same, old material on Circuses, guns, etc. Please describe condition carefully.

Also wanted, these two books:

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also

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then you'll find it very easily in the Round-up, so send for your copy or copies now.

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See Norman J. Becketts two page spread in this issue, also P. J. Morans ad on back cover. Who said old novels were scarce? Guess they are beginning to come to light these days. Lots of nice stuff flying around, so get them while you can.

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